POEMS OF ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE

SELECTED AND EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

HEREFORD B. GEORGE
AND W. H. HADOW

OXFORD: AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this little collection is to supply one more book of English poetry, which may be studied as an alternative to Shakespeare. It is well that boys and girls should make acquaintance in the way of school work with other English literature besides the works of the great dramatist, which are moreover too hard for many classes. Nature-poetry is a plant specially of English growth, and therefore specially worthy of attention in English education; and the study of it has the further advantage that it should quicken observation of nature itself.

We have limited our choice to poetry dealing with nature as it may be seen[1] in England, because, a selection having to be made somehow, it seemed good to direct attention in the first place to things which are to be seen at home. And we have included poetry dealing with country pursuits, as likely to be specially interesting to the young. It may seem strange that there is no poetry about the sea in this volume; but, except for short isolated passages, the sea has been almost entirely neglected by the great English poets down to the present generation. In this country, where

[1] Shelley's *Question* (No. II) and *Invitation* (No. VI) were both written in Italy: but the former is essentially English in character, and the latter (except that the season would be later) wholly applicable to England.

most of those who will use the book know the sea, and all are familiar with the thought of it, we have deemed it better to leave out the sea altogether, if it could not be worthily represented.

The poems selected have been arranged according to their subject-matter, not by the dates of the authors. First come those on the seasons, and the pursuits appropriate to each; then some few descriptive of particular localities; then some about birds and flowers, the most beautiful of the specific objects to be seen in the country; then some poems mainly reflective. Such a method of arrangement, like every other, is open to criticism. Some of the passages placed as descriptive contain a large share of reflection; and one at least, *The Deserted Village*, had for its main object to set forth the poet's social views; but the descriptions even in that are the portions which have won universal admiration. Against a merely chronological arrangement we have the distinguished authority of the *Golden Treasury*, and our own belief that the plan which we have adopted is more suitable for reading in class, the special object for which this compilation has been made.

The Introduction and Notes have been written with the view of furnishing to teachers such information as they may need for the explanation of the poems.

The author's own title is given to every complete poem. Quotation marks are appended to the titles which we have given to extracts from long poems, such as Thomson's *Seasons*.

H. B. G.
W. H. H.

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INTRODUCTION

THE beauties of nature mean so much to us that we can hardly realize how many centuries had to pass, before even civilized man paid them any serious attention, or thought them in themselves fit subjects for poetic treatment. The earliest poetry, apart from hymns and other writings of directly religious character, consisted in the main of stories. These took the form of ballad or saga or epic, and dealt with wars and adventures, hair-breadth escapes and deeds of daring, such as could be sung to the warriors round the evening camp-fire, or could hand down their memories to the citizens of more peaceful times. Then in due course followed other forms of poetry—lyric, elegiac, dramatic—each reflecting the temper of its age, but all treating mainly of human actions and feelings, and using the world of nature only as a common background or as an occasional illustration. To the Greek and Roman poets, through what we call the Classical period, 'the proper study of mankind was man'; and other topics were only considered in so far as they could be made to bear on the one great centre of interest, the story of human life. It is true that in both Greek and Roman poets we find occasional glimpses of landscape, of country scenes and country pursuits; but they are for the most part brief and transitory, seldom more than a few lines in length, and either treated as episodes or pressed into the poet's service as similes. It is a curious fact that the first Greek poet who deliberately set himself to describe the country was the Sicilian Theocritus, that the first Latin poet who did so

was the Gaul Ausonius[1], and that these two stood at the extreme end and verge of their respective literatures.

Allowing for differences of condition, the same law may be observed in the poetry of the Middle Ages. In our Anglo-Saxon poems, and still more in the old French romances, we get occasional touches of nature as distinct from man, but they are never the main purpose of the poem; they are always subservient or accessory. So it is, in a still higher degree, with Dante, where the observation is far more precise, and the subservience far more obvious: so it is again in Chaucer. See, for instance, the charming little description of spring which opens the *Canterbury Tales*. It is one of the most delightful passages in English poetry, full of music and colour, but its whole office is to set the pilgrims on their way; it stands outside the poem as an illuminated initial letter would, in Chaucer's time, have stood outside the sentence which it introduced. It is not a part of the picture, but a jewel set in the frame.

Shakespeare knew everything because he loved everything, and his 'native wood-notes' are as fresh and sweet as the songs of the birds in Arden Forest; but Shakespeare had no rival and has left no successor. Marlowe's 'Come, live with me,' for all its charm is, in comparison, fantastic and artificial. Herrick never strays beyond his parsonage garden, unless it be to watch with an indulgent smile the merrymaking on the village green; and his exquisite lyrics are not really studies of nature, but studies of his own mind amid natural sights and sounds. Milton, in *L'Allegro*, plays for a moment round country life, as you may hear a pastoral tune played upon a great cathedral organ; but the melody, though it has gained in fullness and resonance, has not the open-air simplicity of the shepherd's pipe among the hills.

[1] This, of course, excludes the *Bucolics* of Virgil. But they are not really descriptions of country life at all; they are artificial adaptations of Theocritus to suit the taste of Augustus' court; and the *Georgics* are too didactic to count as exceptions.

And after Milton's death, English poetry went back to the city life, to the streets, the theatre, and the court, and for nearly a hundred years affected to look upon the country as a wilderness, and on its inhabitants as boors and savages. In our literature of the Restoration, and of the reigns of William III, Anne, and the early Georges, London is the centre of all things, and to leave Town is to go into banishment.

Until the latter half of the eighteenth century, then, we can hardly be said to have any ostensible poetry of nature at all—only occasional episodes and interludes from poets who, in the main course and current of their art, were otherwise preoccupied. It is true that many of these are of supreme beauty, 'gems of purest ray serene,' which we can never tire of contemplating; but for the most part they are gems, not flowers: they shine, but do not grow. And from this comparative lack of direct interest in nature and nature's designs we may note two remarkable consequences. First, such nature-poetry as we have yet found is nearly always fine-weather poetry. It is all smiling and friendly, full of sunshine and green meadows and prattling streams. There is never that thrill of delight and wonder with which in later days we have come to watch a storm at sea or among the mountains; indeed, the sea and the mountains are rarely mentioned, and when they appear are treated more with terror or defiance, as enemies to be avoided or overcome, than as the two noblest and most inspiring of man's surroundings. It is quite intelligible that this should be so. Man must penetrate deep into nature before he can learn to love her sterner aspects, and the earlier poets, who knew so much of their fellow men, had not yet mastered the more recondite lesson. Secondly, there is a curious conventionality in the treatment even of those topics which they chose by preference. Except with the two or three greatest men, we find the same epithets, the same figures, even the same points of

view, handed on traditionally almost as matters of form: it would seem as though the poets had no care to observe nature directly, and were content to take her at second-hand from their predecessors. Of this one remarkable instance can be quoted. No one who has heard the nightingale with an unprejudiced ear can doubt that the main note of his song is an intense, overpowering rapture of delight—the fullest expression of unalloyed happiness that the whole world of nature contains. Yet through all this conventional period the poets not only attributed the song to the hen-bird, but, in consequence of a Greek legend, declared it to be plaintive and melancholy[1]. Their nightingale, in short, is as purely mythological a creature as the swan that sings before it dies, or the mandrake that cries aloud when you pull it up by the roots.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century came the reaction. All over Europe there was a summons to 'return to nature': it echoed through social life with Rousseau; it created a new music with Haydn; it broke down conventions of painting with Gainsborough and Constable; it opened an entirely new chapter in the history of English literature. Among our poets this was especially noticeable. Thomson and Cowper began to observe nature, Wordsworth and Coleridge to understand her more fully and more deeply; Scott told us in simple, stirring language the beauties of his native streams and mountains; Crabbe, 'Nature's sternest painter,' made us sympathize with the common joys and sorrows of common people. At first, no doubt, these pioneers were met with stupid and unreasoning opposition. The name 'Lake School,' now one of the most glorious in our literature, was first applied as a term of satire and reproach: defects were

[1] Coleridge's poem (No. XXXII in this volume) is probably the first in which the song of the nightingale has been accurately characterized.

magnified, beauties ignored, accidents mistaken for essentials, and the result remains as one of the most discreditable blunders of English criticism. But a true idea can never be killed. The splenetic wit of Byron has recoiled upon himself, the critics who barked in the reviews have long since been silenced, and the course of English poetry has gone on its way towards a truth, of the very existence of which, before the time of this revolution, it had scarcely dreamed. Not, of course, that the poetry of nature stands alone; still less that it should oust or supersede the poetry of human life and human passion. But, indeed, the two are ideally inseparable, they affect and interpenetrate each other. We know man more fully by knowing his place in nature; we can observe nature to more purpose when—

> The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

With the school of which Wordsworth is the greatest representative the poetry of nature may be said to reach its climax. Even in Shakespeare and Milton the landscape is usually but a background to the human interest; and in the poets who directly followed them country life is artificially treated when it is not ignored. When the change came, in the generation from Thomson to Southey, it made its mark not only on England but on Europe at large, and since that time the tradition has been in some measure carried on. Keats and Shelley, to speak only of our own poets, show an intense love and appreciation of nature; less dignified and so less noble than that of Wordsworth, but most vivid in feeling and most musical in language. With Tennyson it may perhaps be said that the balance swings back again. A most delicate and careful observer of nature, he has filled his poems with a thousand touches of description, so striking that we have sometimes to think twice before we realize that they are true, so exact that we learn from them more than we could learn from a scientific descrip-

tion, so happily expressed that once realized they can never be forgotten. Yet, as Mr. Stopford Brooke says, 'when we do not meet with humanity in his landscape, the landscape by itself is cold. It rarely has any sentiment of its own.' And again, 'His descriptions of what he sees of the outside of the world are luminous and true, but he does not pierce below the surface to a living soul in the universe.' And again, 'When he mingles up human life with nature, then his descriptions of her seem warm. But it is the human sentiment transferred to nature which warms her[1].' This is specially noticeable in the passages from *In Memoriam* quoted in the present volume. Tennyson there sees nature with an extraordinarily true and appreciative eye: he feels her because she reminds him of his lost friend.

It is needless to discuss which of these two standpoints is the higher. Enough that poetry has room for both—for the contemplation that finds its fullest object in nature herself, and for the human sympathy which rests dissatisfied until it is in touch with man. In any case, the teaching of our nature-poetry can never be lost, for it has at the same time opened our eyes to the world in which we live, and enlarged our knowledge of man by widening our view of his surroundings.

[1] See the admirable chapter on 'The Nature-Poetry' in Mr. Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson*.

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I

L'ALLEGRO

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathéd smiles
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides:—
Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;
And if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee
In unreprovéd pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow

Through the sweetbriar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine:
While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great sun begins his state
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
Whilst the landscape round it measures;
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two agéd oaks,

Where Corydon and Thyrsis, met,
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs, and other country messes
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.
  Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequered shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sun-shine holyday,
Till the live-long daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How Faery Mab the junkets eat:—
She was pinched, and pulled, she said;
And he, by Friar's lantern led;
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
  Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
  Towered cities please us then
And the busy hum of men,

Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask, and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learnéd sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever against eating cares
Lap me in soft Lydian airs
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linkéd sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber, on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

J. MILTON.

II

THE QUESTION

I DREAMED that as I wandered by the way
  Bare winter suddenly was changed to spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
  Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
  Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
  Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
  Faint oxlips; tender blue-bells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets—
  Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth—
Its mother's face with heaven-collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
  Green cow-bind and the moonlight-coloured May,
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
  Was the bright dew yet drained not by the day;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine
  With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray;
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
  There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with white,
And starry river-buds among the sedge,
  And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,

Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come
That I might there present it—oh, to Whom?

P. B. SHELLEY.

III

THE FIRST SIGHT OF SPRING

The hazel-blooms, in threads of crimson hue,
Peep through the swelling buds, foretelling Spring,
Ere yet a white-thorn leaf appears in view,
Or March finds throstles pleased enough to sing.
To the old touchwood-tree woodpeckers cling
A moment, and their harsh-toned notes renew;
In happier mood, the stockdove claps his wing;
The squirrel sputters up the powdered oak,
With tail cocked o'er his head, and ears erect,
Startled to hear the woodman's understroke;
And with the courage which his fears collect,
He hisses fierce, half malice and half glee,
Leaping from branch to branch about the tree,
In winter's foliage, moss and lichens, deckt.

J. CLARE.

IV

'EARLY SPRING'

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drowned in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

LORD TENNYSON.

V

HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

Oh, to be in England
Now that April 's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,

That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now.

And after April, when May follows,
And the white-throat builds, and all the swallows—
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That 's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture.
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower,
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower.

R. BROWNING.

VI

THE INVITATION

Best and brightest, come away,—
Fairer far than this fair day,
Which, like thee, to those in sorrow
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough year just awake
In its cradle on the brake.
The brightest hour of unborn spring
Through the winter wandering,
Found, it seems, the halcyon morn
To hoar February born;
Bending from heaven, in azure mirth,
It kissed the forehead of the earth,

And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free,
And waked to music all their fountains,
And breathed upon the frozen mountains,
And like a prophetess of May
Strewed flowers upon the barren way,
Making the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs—
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music, lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.

Radiant sister of the day,
Awake, arise, and come away;
To the wild woods and the plains,
To the pools where winter rains
Image all their roof of leaves,
Where the pine its garland weaves
Of sapless green, and ivy dun,
Round stems that never kiss the sun;
Where the lawns and pastures be
And the sandhills of the sea;
Where the melting hoar-frost wets
The daisy-star that never sets,
And wind-flowers and violets
Which yet join not scent to hue
Crown the pale year weak and new;
When the night is left behind
In the deep east, dim and blind,

And the blue noon is over us,
And the multitudinous
Billows murmur at our feet,
Where the earth and ocean meet,
And all things seem only one
In the universal sun.

P. B. SHELLEY.

VII

'TROUT FISHING'

Now when the first foul torrent of the brooks,
Swelled with the vernal rains, is ebbed away;
And, whitening, down their mossy-tinctured stream
Descends the billowy foam: now is the time,
While yet the dark-brown water aids the guile,
To tempt the trout. The well-dissembled fly,
The rod fine-tapering with elastic spring,
Snatched from the hoary steed the floating line,
And all thy slender watery stores prepare.
But let not on thy hook the tortured worm,
Convulsive, twist in agonizing folds;
Which, by rapacious hunger swallowed deep,
Gives, as you tear it from the bleeding breast
Of the weak helpless uncomplaining wretch,
Harsh pain and horror to the tender hand.

When with his lively ray the potent sun
Has pierced the streams, and roused the finny race,
Then, issuing cheerful, to thy sport repair;
Chief should the western breezes curling play,
And light o'er ether bear the shadowy clouds.
High to their fount, this day, amid the hills,
And woodlands warbling round, trace up the brooks;
The next, pursue their rocky-channelled maze,
Down to the river, in whose ample wave

Their little Naiads love to sport at large.
Just in the dubious point, where with the pool
Is mixed the trembling stream, or where it boils
Around the stone, or from the hollowed bank
Reverted plays in undulating flow,
There throw, nice-judging, the delusive fly;
And as you lead it round in artful curve,
With eye attentive mark the springing game.
Straight as above the surface of the flood
They wanton rise, or urged by hunger leap,
Then fix, with gentle twitch, the barbéd hook:
Some lightly tossing to the grassy bank,
And to the shelving shore slow-dragging some,
With various hand proportioned to their force.
If yet too young, and easily deceived,
A worthless prey scarce bends your pliant rod,
Him, piteous of his youth and the short space
He has enjoyed the vital light of heaven,
Soft disengage, and back into the stream
The speckled captive throw. But should you lure
From his dark haunt, beneath the tangled roots
Of pendent trees, the monarch of the brook,
Behoves you then to ply your finest art.
Long time he, following cautious, scans the fly;
And oft attempts to seize it, but as oft
The dimpled water speaks his jealous fear.
At last, while haply o'er the shaded sun
Passes a cloud, he desperate takes the death,
With sullen plunge. At once he darts along,
Deep struck, and runs out all the lengthened line;
Then seeks the farthest ooze, the sheltering weed,
The caverned bank, his old secure abode;
And flies aloft, and flounces round the pool,
Indignant of the guile. With yielding hand,
That feels him still, yet to his furious course
Gives way, you, now retiring, following now

Across the stream, exhaust his idle rage:
Till floating broad upon his breathless side,
And to his fate abandoned, to the shore
You gaily drag your unresisting prize.

J. THOMSON.

VIII

'THE COMING OF SUMMER'

I stood tiptoe upon a little hill,
The air was cooling, and so very still,
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scanty-leaved, and finely-tapering stems,
Had not yet lost their starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new-shorn,
And fresh from the clear brook; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves;
For not the faintest motion could be seen
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.
There was wide wandering for the greediest eye,
To peer about upon variety;
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim;
To picture out the quaint and curious bending
Of a fresh woodland alley never-ending:
Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,
Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves.
I gazed awhile, and felt as light and free
As though the fanning wings of Mercury
Had played upon my heels: I was light-hearted,
And many pleasures to my vision started;

So I straightway began to pluck a posy
Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy;
A bush of May-flowers with the bees about them,
Ah, sure no tasteful nook could be without them:
And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,
And let long grass grow round the roots, to keep them
Moist, cool and green; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert-hedge with wild-briar overtwined,
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
Upon their summer thrones; there too should be
The frequent chequer of a youngling tree,
That with a score of light green brethren shoots
From the quaint mossiness of aged roots:
Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters,
Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters,
The spreading blue-bells: it may haply mourn
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly
By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds;
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung;
And when again your dowiness he kisses,
Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses:
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the vale.

Here are sweet peas, on tiptoe for a flight:
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,

And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings.
Linger awhile upon some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
And watch intently nature's gentle doings:
They will be found softer than ringdoves' cooings.
How silent comes the water round that bend!
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'erhanging sallows: blades of grass
Slowly across the chequered shadows pass.
Why you might read two sonnets, ere they reach
To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds;
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Tempered with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand;
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain;
But turn your eye, and they are there again.
The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,
And cool themselves among the emerald tresses;
The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
And moisture, that the bowery green may live:
So keeping up an interchange of favours,
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours.
Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
From low-hung branches: little space they stop;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak:
Or perhaps, to show their black and wanton wings,
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.

J. KEATS.

IX

HUNTING SONG

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
On the mountain dawns the day;
All the jolly chase is here
With hawk and horse and hunting-spear;
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily, merrily, mingle they,
'Waken, lords and ladies gay.'

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
The mist has left the mountain gray,
Springlets in the dawn are steaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been
To track the buck in thicket green;
Now we come to chant our lay,
'Waken, lords and ladies gay.'

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
To the greenwood haste away;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot and tall of size;
We can show the marks he made
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed;
You shall see him brought to bay;
'Waken, lords and ladies gay.'

Louder, louder chant the lay,
Waken, lords and ladies gay;
Tell them youth and mirth and glee
Run a course as well as we;

Time, stern huntsman, who can baulk,
Stanch as hound and fleet as hawk;
Think of this, and rise with day,
Gentle lords and ladies gay.

SIR W. SCOTT.

X

'HAYMAKING AND SHEEPWASHING'

Now swarms the village o'er the jovial mead:
The rustic youth, brown with meridian toil,
Healthful and strong; full as the summer rose
Blown by prevailing suns, the ruddy maid,
Half naked, swelling on the sight, and all
Her kindled graces burning o'er her cheek.
Even stooping age is here; and infant hands
Trail the long rake, or, with the fragrant load
O'ercharged, amid the kind oppression roll.
Wide flies the tedded grain; all in a row
Advancing broad, or wheeling round the field,
They spread the breathing harvest to the sun,
That throws refreshful round a rural smell:
Or, as they rake the green-appearing ground,
And drive the dusky wave along the mead,
The russet hay-cock rises thick behind,
In order gay. While heard from dale to dale,
Waking the breeze, resounds the blended voice
Of happy labour, love, and social glee.
Or rushing thence, in one diffusive band,
They drive the troubled flocks, by many a dog
Compelled, to where the mazy-running brook
Forms a deep pool; this bank abrupt and high,
And that fair-spreading in a pebbled shore.
Urged to the giddy brink, much is the toil,
The clamour much, of men, and boys, and dogs,

Ere the soft fearful people to the flood
Commit their woolly sides. And oft the swain,
On some impatient seizing, hurls them in:
Emboldened then, nor hesitating more,
Fast, fast, they plunge amid the flashing wave,
And, panting, labour to the farthest shore.
Repeated this, till deep the well-washed fleece
Has drunk the flood, and from his lively haunt
The trout is banished by the sordid stream;
Heavy, and dripping, to the breezy brow
Slow move the harmless race: where, as they spread
Their swelling treasures to the sunny ray,
Inly disturbed, and wondering what this wild
Outrageous tumult means, their loud complaints
The country fill; and, tossed from rock to rock,
Incessant bleatings run around the hills.
At last, of snowy white, the gathered flocks
Are in the wattled pen innumerous pressed,
Head above head; and ranged in lusty rows
The shepherds sit, and whet the sounding shears.
The housewife waits to roll her fleecy stores,
With all her gay-drest maids attending round.
One, chief, in gracious dignity enthroned,
Shines o'er the rest, the pastoral queen, and rays
Her smiles, sweet-beaming, on her shepherd-king;
While the glad circle round them yield their souls
To festive mirth, and wit that knows no gall.
Meantime, their joyous task goes on apace:
Some mingling, stir the melted tar, and some,
Deep on the new-shorn vagrant's heaving side,
To stamp the master's cipher ready stand:
Others the unwilling wether drag along;
And, glorying in his might, the sturdy boy
Holds by the twisted horns the indignant ram.
Behold where bound, and of its robe bereft,
By needy man, that all-depending lord,

How meek, how patient, the mild creature lies!
What softness in its melancholy face,
What dumb complaining innocence appears!
Fear not, ye gentle tribes, 'tis not the knife
Of horrid slaughter that is o'er you waved;
No, 'tis the tender swain's well-guided shears,
Who having now, to pay his annual care,
Borrowed your fleece—to you a cumbrous load—
Will send you bounding to your hills again.

J. THOMSON.

XI

ODE TO AUTUMN

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twinéd flowers:
And sometime like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barréd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river-sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

J. KEATS.

XII

AUTUMN

I saw old Autumn in the misty morn
Stand shadowless like silence, listening
To silence, for no lonely bird would sing
Into his hollow ear from woods forlorn,
Nor lowly hedge nor solitary thorn;—
Shaking his languid locks all dewy bright
With tangled gossamer that fell by night,
Pearling his coronet of golden corn.

Where are the songs of summer?—With the sun,
Oping the dusky eyelids of the south,
Till shade and silence waken up as one,
And morning sings with a warm odorous mouth.
Where are the merry birds?—Away, away,
On panting wings through the inclement skies,
Lest owls should prey
Undazzled at noon-day,
And tear with horny beak their lustrous eyes.

Where are the blooms of summer?—In the west,
Blushing their last to the last sunny hours,
When the mild eve by sudden night is prest
Like tearful Proserpine, snatched from her flow'rs
To a most gloomy breast.
Where is the pride of summer,—the green prime,—
The many, many leaves all twinkling?—Three
On the mossed elm; three on the naked lime
Trembling,—and one upon the old oak tree!
Where is the Dryad's immortality?—
Gone into mournful cypress and dark yew,
And wearing the long gloomy winter through
In the smooth holly's green eternity.

The squirrel gloats on his accomplished hoard,
The ants have brimmed their garners with ripe grain,
And honey bees have stored
The sweets of summer in their luscious cells;
The swallows all have winged across the main;
But here the autumn melancholy dwells,
And sighs her tearful spells
Amongst the sunless shadows of the plain.
Alone, alone,
Upon a mossy stone,
She sits and reckons up the dead and gone
With the last leaves for a love-rosary,
Whilst all the withered world looks drearily,
Like a dim picture of the drownéd past
In the hushed mind's mysterious far away,
Doubtful what ghostly thing will steal the last
Into that distance, grey upon the grey.

T. HOOD.

XIII

'NUTTING'

It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out)
One of those heavenly days that cannot die;
When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,
I left our cottage-threshold, sallying forth
With a huge wallet o'er my shoulders slung,
A nutting-crook in hand; and turned my steps
Toward some far-distant wood, a figure quaint,
Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds
Which for that service had been husbanded
By exhortation of my frugal dame—
Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles,—and, in truth,
More ragged than need was. O'er pathless rocks,
Through beds of matted fern, and tangled thickets,
Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook
Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation; but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung,
A virgin scene. A little while I stood,
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and, with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet;—or beneath the trees I sate
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;
A temper known to those who, after long
And weary expectation, have been blest
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves
The violets of five seasons reappear

And fade, unseen by any human eye;
Where fairy waterbreaks do murmur on
For ever; and I saw the sparkling foam,
And—with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, under the shady trees,
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep—
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage: and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being: and, unless I now
Confound my present feelings with the past,
Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.

W. WORDSWORTH.

XIV

'AUTUMN CHANGING TO WINTER'

November's sky is chill and drear,
November's leaf is red and sear:
Late, gazing down the steepy linn
That hems our little garden in,

Low in its dark and narrow glen
You scarce the rivulet might ken,
So thick the tangled greenwood grew,
So feeble trilled the streamlet through:
Now, murmuring hoarse, and frequent seen
Through bush and briar, no longer green,
An angry brook, it sweeps the glade,
Brawls over rock and wild cascade,
And foaming brown, with doubled speed,
Hurries its waters to the Tweed.

No longer autumn's glowing red
Upon our forest hills is shed;
No more, beneath the evening beam,
Fair Tweed reflects their purple gleam;
Away hath passed the heather-bell
That bloomed so rich on Needpath Fell;
Sallow his brow; and russet bare
Are now the sister-heights of Yair.

The sheep, before the pinching heaven,
To sheltered dale and down are driven,
Where yet some faded herbage pines,
And yet a watery sunbeam shines:
In meek despondency they eye
The withered sward and wintry sky,
And far beneath their summer hill,
Stray sadly by Glenkinnon's rill:
The shepherd shifts his mantle's fold,
And wraps him closer from the cold;
His dogs no merry circles wheel,
But, shivering, follow at his heel;
A cowering glance they often cast,
As deeper moans the gathering blast.

My imps, though hardy, bold, and wild,
As best befits the mountain child,

Feel the sad influence of the hour,
And wail the daisy's vanished flower;
Their summer gambols tell, and mourn,
And anxious ask,—'Will spring return,
And birds and lambs again be gay,
And blossoms clothe the hawthorn spray?'

Yes, prattlers, yes. The daisy's flower
Again shall paint your summer bower;
Again the hawthorn shall supply
The garlands you delight to tie;
The lambs upon the lea shall bound,
And wild birds carol to the round,
And, while you frolic light as they,
Too short shall seem the summer day.

SIR W. SCOTT.

XV

'A WINTER WALK'

The night was winter in his roughest mood,
The morning sharp and clear: but now at noon
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale,
And through the trees I view the embattled tower
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.

The roof, though movable through all its length
As the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,
And, intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought:
The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half suppressed:
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
That tinkle in the withered leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence.

W. COWPER.

XVI

'SKATING'

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe,
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things -
With life and nature- purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley made

A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me
It was a time of rapture. Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,

When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round;
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

W. WORDSWORTH.

XVII

'CHRISTMAS-TIDE'

Heap on more wood, the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer:
Even, heathen yet, the savage Dane
At Iol more deep the mead did drain;
High on the beach his galleys drew,
And feasted all his pirate crew;
Then in his low and pine-built hall,
Where shields and axes decked the wall,
They gorged upon the half dressed steer,
Caroused in seas of sable beer;
While round, in brutal jest, were thrown
The half-gnawed rib, and marrow-bone:
Or listened all, in grim delight,
While scalds yelled out the joys of fight.
Then forth, in frenzy, would they hie,
While wildly-loose their red locks fly,

And dancing round the blazing pile,
They make such barbarous mirth the while,
As best might to the mind recall
The boisterous joys of Odin's hall.

And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night;
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung:
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of 'post and pair.'
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.

The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the day to grace,

Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
By old blue-coated serving-man;
Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell
How, when, and where, the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassel round, in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.
There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide, her savoury goose.
Then came the merry maskers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made;
But, oh, what maskers, richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

Still linger, in our northern clime,
Some remnants of the good old time;
And still, within our valleys here,

We hold the kindred title dear,
Even when, perchance, its far-fetched claim
To Southron ear sounds empty name;
For course of blood, our proverbs deem,
Is warmer than the mountain-stream.
And thus, my Christmas still I hold
Where my great-grandsire came of old,
With amber beard, and flaxen hair,
And reverend apostolic air—
The feast and holy-tide to share,
And mix sobriety with wine,
And honest mirth with thoughts divine.
Small thought was his, in after time
E'er to be hitched into a rhyme;
The simple sire could only boast,
That he was loyal to his cost;
The banished race of kings revered,
And lost his land,—but kept his beard.

SIR W. SCOTT.

XVIII

'ENGLISH RIVERS'

Rivers, arise; whether thou be the son
Of utmost Tweed, or Ouse, or gulphy Dun,
Or Trent, who, like some earth-born giant, spreads
His thirty arms along the indented meads;
Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath;
Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden's death;
Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lee,
Or coaly Tine, or ancient hallowed Dee;
Or Humber loud, that keeps the Scythian's name;
Or Medway mouth, or royal-towered Thame.

J. MILTON.

XIX

THE BROOK

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars,
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

LORD TENNYSON.

XX

THE EBB TIDE

Slowly thy flowing tide
Came in, old Avon; scarcely did mine eyes,
As watchfully I roamed thy green-wood side,
Behold the gentle rise.

With many a stroke and strong
The labouring boatmen upward plied their oars,
And yet the eye beheld them labouring long
Between thy winding shores.

Now down thine ebbing tide
The unlaboured boat falls rapidly along,
The solitary helmsman sits to guide
And sings an idle song.

Now o'er the rocks, that lay
So silent late, the shallow current roars;
Fast flow thy waters on their seaward way
Through wider-spreading shores.

Avon, I gaze and know
The wisdom emblemed in thy varying way,
It speaks of human joys that rise so slow,
So rapidly decay.

Kingdoms that long have stood
And slow to strength and power attained at last,
Thus from the summit of high fortune's flood
Ebb to their ruin fast.

So tardily appears
The course of time to manhood's envied stage,
Alas, how hurryingly the ebbing years
Then hasten to old age!

R. SOUTHEY.

XXI

'A GREEN AND SILENT SPOT'

A GREEN and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
No singing skylark ever poised himself.
The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,

Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,
All golden with the never-bloomless furze,
Which now blooms most profusely: but the dell,
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As vernal corn-field, or the unripe flax,
When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
The level sunshine glimmers with green light.
Oh, 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook,
Which all, methinks, would love; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly as had made
His early manhood more securely wise.
Here he might lie on fern or withered heath,
While from the singing-lark (that sings unseen
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),
And from the sun, and from the breezy air,
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of nature.
And so, his senses gradually wrapt
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming, hears thee still, O singing-lark,
That singest like an angel in the clouds.

S. T. COLERIDGE.

XXII

'A LONELY COTTAGE'

Once went I forth, and found, till then unknown,
A cottage, whither oft we since repair:
'Tis perched upon the green hill-top, but close
Environed with a ring of branching elms
That overhang the thatch, itself unseen,
Peeps at the vale below; so thick beset

With foliage of such dark redundant growth,
I called the low-roofed lodge the Peasant's Nest.
And hidden as it is, and far remote
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
In village or in town, the bay of curs
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,
And infants clamorous whether pleased or pained,
Oft have I wished the peaceful covert mine.
Here, I have said, at least I should possess
The poet's treasure, silence, and indulge
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.
Vain thought! the dweller in that still retreat
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.
Its elevated site forbids the wretch
To drink sweet waters of the crystal well;
He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,
And, heavy laden, brings his beverage home,
Far-fetched and little worth: nor seldom waits,
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,
Angry and sad, and his last crust consumed.
So farewell envy of the Peasant's Nest;
If solitude make scant the means of life,
Society for me! Thou seeming sweet,
Be still a pleasing object in my view,
My visit still, but never mine abode.

W. COWPER.

XXIII

'LEAVING A COUNTRY HOME'

Unwatched, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down,
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair,
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
The brook shall babble down the plain,
At noon or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
And flood the haunts of hern and crake;
Or into silver arrows break
The sailing moon in creek and cove;

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the stranger's child;

As year by year the labourer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades;
And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.

We leave the well-beloved place
Where first we gazed upon the sky;
The roofs, that heard our earliest cry,
Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,
As down the garden-walks I move,
Two spirits of a diverse love
Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, 'Here thy boyhood sung
Long since its matin song, and heard
The low love-language of the bird
In native hazels tassel-hung.'

The other answers, 'Yea, but here
  Thy feet have strayed in after hours
  With thy lost friend among the bowers,
And this hath made them trebly dear.'

These two have striven half the day,
  And each prefers his separate claim,
  Poor rivals in a losing game,
That will not yield each other way.

I turn to go: my feet are set
  To leave the pleasant fields and farms;
  They mix in one another's arms
To one pure image of regret.

LORD TENNYSON.

XXIV

FOUNTAINS ABBEY

Abbey, for ever smiling pensively,
  How like a thing of nature dost thou rise
  Amid her loveliest works; as if the skies,
Clouded with grief, were arched thy roof to be,
And the tall trees were copied all from thee,
  Mourning thy fortunes – while the waters dim
  Flow like the memory of thy evening hymn,
Beautiful in their sorrowing sympathy;
As if they with a weeping sister wept,
  Winds name thy name; but thou, though sad, art calm,
And time with thee his plighted troth hath kept;
  For harebells deck thy brow, and, at thy feet,
  Where sleep the proud, the bee and redbreast meet,
Mixing thy sighs with nature's lonely psalm.

E. ELLIOTT.

XXV

'SCENERY ABOUT OXFORD'.

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes;
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropped grasses shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanched green,
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest.

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruise,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screened is this nook o er the high, half-reaped field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd, will I be;
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade,
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,
The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
Of shining parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars whom at college erst he knew
Met him, and of his way of life enquired.
Whereat he answered, that the gipsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains;
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill.'

This said, he left them, and returned no more.—
But rumours hung about the country-side,
That the lost scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frocked boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly;—
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,

And put the shepherds, wanderer, on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast passed their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moored to the cool bank in the summer heats,
Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green-muffled Cumnor hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground;
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more.—
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leafed, white anemone,
Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none has words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering
Thames,

To bathe in the abandoned lasher pass,
Have often passed thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Marked thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wert gone.

At some lone homestead in the Cumnor hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee haunting, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley-wood,
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagged and shreds of grey,
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird picking food
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,
And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face toward Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climbed the hill,

And gained the white brow of the Cumnor range;
Turned once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequestered grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy tribe.
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave—
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

M. ARNOLD.

XXVI

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene;
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made.

How often have I blessed the coming day,
When toil, remitting, lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round;
And still, as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain, mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place;
The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove.
These were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
These were thy charms—but all these charms are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away, thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green—
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet Auburn, parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here, as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;

To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose:
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care, that never must be mine,
How happy he who crowns, in shades like these,
A youth of labour with an age of ease;
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly.
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
No surly porter stands, in guilty state,
To spurn imploring famine from the gate;
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending virtue's friend;
Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way;
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
His heaven commences ere the world be past.

Sweet was the sound, when oft, at evening's close,
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
There, as I passed with careless steps and slow,
The mingled notes came softened from below;
The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young;
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school;
The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind;—

These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And filled each pause the nightingale had made.
But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale;
No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
For all the bloomy flush of life is fled:
All but yon widowed, solitary thing,
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
She, wretched matron,—forced, in age, for bread,
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn,—
She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden-flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, his place;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his agéd breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talked the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.

Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control,
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
E'en children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile;
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed;
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,

There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school:
A man severe he was, and stern to view,
I knew him well, and every truant knew;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned:
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault.
The village all declared how much he knew;
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;
While words of learnéd length and thundering sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.
But past is all his fame;—the very spot
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.
Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlour splendours of that festive place;
The whitewashed wall, the nicely-sanded floor,
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
The chest, contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;

The pictures placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose;
The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,
With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay;
While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.
Vain transitory splendours, could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall?
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;
The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be prest,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.
Yes, let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art:
Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined:
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain:
And, e'en while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks if this be joy.
Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen, who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,

'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and a happy land.
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
And shouting folly hails them from her shore;
Hoards, e'en beyond the miser's wish, abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds:
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth;
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world supplies;
While thus the land, adorned for pleasure all,
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female, unadorned and plain,
Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
Slights every borrowed charm that dress supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes;
But when those charms are past, for charms are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
In all the glaring impotence of dress:
Thus fares the land by luxury betrayed;
In nature's simplest charms at first arrayed,
But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise;
While, scourged by famine, from the smiling land
The mournful peasant leads his humble band;
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms—a garden and a grave.

Where, then, ah, where shall poverty reside,
To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride?
If to some common's fenceless limits strayed,
He drives his flocks to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And e'en the bare-worn common is denied.
If to the city sped—what waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury and thin mankind;
To see those joys the sons of pleasure know,
Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe.
Here while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
Here while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign,
Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train;
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy;
Sure these denote one universal joy.
Are these thy serious thoughts? Ah, turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shivering female lies:
She once, perhaps, in village plenty blessed,
Has wept at tales of innocence distressed;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn;
Now lost to all, her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from the shower
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.
Do thine, sweet Auburn, thine, the loveliest train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?

E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread!
Ah, no! To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe.
Far different there from all that charmed before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;
Those poisonous fields, with rank luxuriance crowned,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around;
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,
And savage men more murderous still than they;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only sheltered thefts of harmless love.
Good Heaven! what sorrows gloomed that parting day,
That called them from their native walks away;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly looked their last,
And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main;
And, shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.
The good old sire the first prepared to go
To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe;
But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wished for worlds beyond the grave.

His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
And blessed the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kissed her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
And clasped them close, in sorrow doubly dear;
Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the silent manliness of grief.

O Luxury, thou cursed by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee;
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasure only to destroy;
Kingdoms, by thee, to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigour not their own;
At every draught more large and large they grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;
Till, sapped their strength, and every part unsound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.

E'en now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done;
E'en now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented Toil, and hospitable Care,
And kind connubial Tenderness are there;
And Piety with wishes placed above,
And steady Loyalty, and faithful Love.

And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
Unfit, in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;

Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell! and oh, where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of th' inclement clime;
Aid slighted Truth with thy persuasive strain;
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
Teach him, that states of native strength possessed,
Though very poor, may still be very blessed;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

O. GOLDSMITH.

XXVII

ODE TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire,
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight:

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody;—

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingéd thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal
Or triumphal chaunt
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt—
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground.

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now!

P. B. SHELLEY.

XXVIII

THE CUCKOO

Hail, beauteous stranger of the grove,
Thou messenger of spring;
Now Heaven repairs thy rural seat,
And woods thy welcome sing.

What time the daisy decks the green,
Thy certain voice we hear;
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
Or mark the rolling year?

Delightful visitant, with thee
I hail the time of flowers,
And hear the sound of music sweet
From birds among the bowers.

The school-boy wandering through the wood
To pull the primrose gay,
Starts the new voice of spring to hear,
And imitates the lay.

What time the pea puts on the bloom
Thou fliest thy vocal vale,
An annual guest in other lands,
Another spring to hail.

Sweet bird, thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year!

O could I fly, I'd fly with thee;
We'd make, with joyful wing,
Our annual visit o'er the globe,
Companions of the spring.

J. LOGAN.

XXIX

THE GREEN LINNET

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard-seat,
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest:
Hail to thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion:
Thou, linnet, in thy green array,
Presiding spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May;
And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment:
A life, a presence like the air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair;
Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
  Yet seeming still to hover;
There, where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
  That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
A brother of the dancing leaves;
Then flits, and from the cottage eaves
  Pours forth his song in gushes;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless form he chose to feign,
  While fluttering in the bushes.

W. WORDSWORTH.

XXX

THE THRUSH'S NEST

Within a thick and spreading hawthorn bush,
  That overhung a mole-hill large and round,
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush
  Sing hymns of rapture, while I drank the sound
With joy; and oft, an unintruding guest,
  I watched her secret toils from day to day,
How true she warped the moss to form her nest,
  And modelled it within with wool and clay.
And by-and-by, like heath-bells gilt with dew,
  There lay her shining eggs as bright as flowers,
Ink-spotted over, shells of green and blue;
  And there I witnessed, in the summer hours,
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,
  Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.

J. CLARE.

XXXI

THE WREN'S NEST

Among the dwellings framed by birds
In field or forest with nice care,
Is none that with the little wren's
In snugness may compare.

No door the tenement requires,
And seldom needs a laboured roof;
Yet is it to the fiercest sun
Impervious, and storm-proof.

So warm, so beautiful withal,
In perfect fitness for its aim,
That to the kind by special grace
Their instinct surely came.

And when for their abodes they seek
An opportune recess,
The hermit has no finer eye
For shadowy quietness.

These find, 'mid ivied abbey-walls,
A canopy in some still nook;
Others are pent-housed by a brae
That overhangs a brook.

There to the brooding bird her mate
Warbles by fits his low clear song;
And by the busy streamlet both
Are sung to all day long.

Or in sequestered lanes they build,
Where, till the flitting bird's return,
Her eggs within the nest repose,
Like relics in an urn.

But still, where general choice is good,
There is a better and a best;
And, among fairest objects, some
Are fairer than the rest;

This, one of those small builders proved
In a green covert, where, from out
The forehead of a pollard oak,
The leafy antlers sprout;

For she who planned the mossy lodge,
Mistrusting her evasive skill,
Had to the primrose looked for aid
Her wishes to fulfil.

High on the trunk's projecting brow,
And fixed an infant's span above
The budding flowers, peeped forth the nest
The prettiest of the grove.

The treasure proudly did I show
To some whose minds without disdain
Can turn to little things; but once
Looked up for it in vain:

'Tis gone—a ruthless spoiler's prey,
Who heeds not beauty, love, or song,
'Tis gone (so seemed it), and we grieved
Indignant at the wrong.

Just three days after, passing by
In clearer light the moss-built cell
I saw, espied its shaded mouth;
And felt that all was well.

The primrose for a veil had spread
The largest of her upright leaves;
And thus, for purposes benign,
A simple flower deceives.

Concealed from friends who might disturb
Thy quiet with no ill intent,
Secure from evil eyes and hands
On barbarous plunder bent,

Rest, mother-bird, and when thy young
Take flight, and thou art free to roam,
When withered is the guardian flower,
And empty thy late home,

Think how ye prospered, thou and thine,
Amid the unviolated grove
Housed near the growing primrose-tuft
In foresight, or in love.

W. WORDSWORTH.

XXXII

THE NIGHTINGALE

'Tis the merry nightingale
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul
Of all its music.

And I know a grove
Of large extent, hard by a castle huge,
Which the great lord inhabits not; and so
This grove is wild with tangling underwood,
And the trim walks are broken up, and grass,
Thin grass and king-cups grow within the paths.
But never elsewhere in one place I knew
So many nightingales; and far and near,
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,

They answer and provoke each other's song,
With skirmish and capricious passagings,
And murmurs musical and swift jug jug,
And one low piping sound more sweet than all—
Stirring the air with such an harmony,
That should you close your eyes, you might almost
Forget it was not day. On moon-lit bushes,
Whose dewy leaflets are but half disclosed,
You may perchance behold them on the twigs,
Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,
Glistening, while many a glow-worm in the shade
Lights up her love-torch.

S. T. COLERIDGE.

XXXIII

THE REDBREAST AND THE BUTTERFLY

Art thou the bird whom man loves best,
The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
Our little English robin;
The bird that comes about our doors
When autumn-winds are sobbing?
Art thou the Peter of Norway boors?
Their Thomas in Finland,
And Russia far inland?
The bird that by some name or other
All men who know thee call their brother,
The darling of children and men?
Could Father Adam open his eyes
And see this sight beneath the skies,
He'd wish to close them again.
—If the butterfly knew but his friend,
Hither his flight he would bend;

And find his way to me,
Under the branches of the tree:
In and out, he darts about;
Can this be the bird, to man so good,
That, after their bewildering,
Covered with leaves the little children,
So painfully in the wood?
What ailed thee, robin, that thou couldst pursue
A beautiful creature,
That is gentle by nature?
Beneath the summer sky
From flower to flower let him fly;
'Tis all that he wishes to do.
The cheerer thou of our indoor sadness,
He is the friend of our summer gladness:
What hinders, then, that ye should be
Playmates in the sunny weather,
And fly about in the air together?
His beautiful wings in crimson are drest,
A crimson as bright as thine own:
Wouldst thou be happy in thy nest,
O pious bird, whom man loves best,
Love him, or leave him alone.

W. WORDSWORTH

XXXIV

BLOSSOMS

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past,
But you may stay yet here awhile
To blush and gently smile,
And go at last.

What, were ye born to be
An hour or half's delight,
And so to bid good-night?
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth
Merely to show your worth,
And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave:
And after they have shown their pride
Like you, awhile, they glide
Into the grave.

R. HERRICK.

XXXV

DAFFODILS

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon:
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the even-song;
And, having prayed together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay
As you, or any thing.

We die,
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew
Ne'er to be found again.

R. HERRICK.

XXXVI

'SPRING FLOWERS'

At length the finished garden to the view
Its vistas opens, and its alleys green.
Snatched through the verdant maze, the hurried eye
Distracted wanders; now the bowery walk
Of covert close, where scarce a speck of day
Falls on the lengthened gloom, protracted sweeps:
Now meets the bending sky; the river now
Dimpling along, the breezy ruffled lake,
The forest darkening round, the glittering spire,
Th' ethereal mountain, and the distant main.
But why so far excursive? when at hand,
Along these blushing borders, bright with dew,
And in yon mingled wilderness of flowers,
Fair-handed spring unbosoms every grace;
Throws out the snowdrop, and the crocus first;
The daisy, primrose, violet darkly blue,
And polyanthus of unnumbered dyes;
The yellow wall-flower, stained with iron-brown;
And lavish stock that scents the garden round:
From the soft wing of vernal breezes shed,
Anemones; auriculas, enriched
With shining meal o'er all their velvet leaves;
And full ranunculas, of glowing red.
Then comes the tulip race, where beauty plays
Her idle freaks; from family diffused
To family, as flies the father-dust,

The varied colours run; and, while they break
On the charmed eye, th' exulting florist marks,
With secret pride, the wonders of his hand.
No gradual bloom is wanting: from the bud,
First-born of spring, to summer's musky tribes:
Nor hyacinths, of purest virgin white,
Low bent, and blushing inward; nor jonquils,
Of potent fragrance; nor Narcissus fair,
As o'er the fabled fountain hanging still;
Nor broad carnations, nor gay-spotted pinks;
Nor, showered from every bush, the damask rose.
Infinite numbers, delicacies, smells,
With hues on hues expression cannot paint,
The breath of nature, and her endless bloom.

J. THOMSON.

XXXVII

THE DAISY

With little here to do or see
Of things that in the great world be,
Daisy, again I talk to thee,
For thou art worthy,
Thou unassuming common-place
Of nature, with that homely face,
And yet with something of a grace
Which love makes for thee.

Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit, and play with similes,
Loose types of things through all degrees,
Thoughts of thy raising:
And many a fond and idle name
I give to thee, for praise or blame,
As is the humour of the game,
While I am gazing.

A nun demure of lowly port;
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,
In thy simplicity the sport
Of all temptations;
A queen in crown of rubies drest;
A starveling in a scanty vest;
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,
Thy appellations.

A little Cyclops with one eye
Staring to threaten and defy,
That thought comes next—and instantly
The freak is over,
The shape will vanish—and behold
A silver shield with boss of gold,
That spreads itself, some faery bold
In fight to cover.

I see thee glittering from afar—
And then thou art a pretty star;
Not quite so fair as many are
In heaven above thee:
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest;—
May peace come never to his nest,
Who shall reprove thee!

Bright flower, for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,
Sweet silent creature,
That breath'st with me in sun and air,
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature.

W. WORDSWORTH.

XXXVIII

THE LESSER CELANDINE

THERE is a flower, the lesser celandine,
That shrinks, like many more, from cold and rain;
And, the first moment that the sun may shine,
Bright as the sun himself, 'tis out again.

When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm,
Or blasts the green field and the trees distrest,
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,
In close self-shelter, like a thing at rest.

But lately, one rough day, this flower I passed
And recognized it, though an altered form,
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.

I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
'It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold:
This neither is its courage nor its choice,
But its necessity in being old.

'The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;
It cannot help itself in its decay;
Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue.'
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was grey.

To be a prodigal's favourite—then, worse truth,
A miser's pensioner—behold our lot:
O man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things youth needed not!

W. WORDSWORTH.

XXXIX

THE HOLLY TREE

O Reader, hast thou ever stood to see
The Holly Tree?
The eye that contemplates it well perceives
Its glossy leaves
Ordered by an intelligence so wise,
As might confound the atheist's sophistries.

Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen
Wrinkled and keen;
No grazing cattle through their prickly round
Can reach to wound;
But as they grow where nothing is to fear,
Smooth and unarmed the pointless leaves appear.

I love to view these things with curious eyes,
And moralize;
And in the wisdom of the Holly Tree
Can emblems see
Wherewith perchance to make a pleasant rhyme,
Such as may profit in the after-time.

So, though abroad perchance I might appear
Harsh and austere,
To those who on my leisure would intrude
Reserved and rude;
Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be,
Like the high leaves upon the Holly Tree.

And should my youth, as youth is apt, I know,
Some harshness show,
All vain asperities I day by day
Would wear away,
Till the smooth temper of my age should be
Like the high leaves upon the Holly Tree.

And as when all the summer trees are seen
So bright and green,
The holly leaves their fadeless hues display
Less bright than they,
But when the bare and wintry woods we see,
What then so cheerful as the Holly Tree?

So serious should my youth appear among
The thoughtless throng,
So would I seem amid the young and gay
More grave than they,
That in my age as cheerful I might be
As the green winter of the Holly Tree.

R. SOUTHEY.

XL

ODE ON THE INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose,
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,

Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday;—
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
shepherd-boy!

Ye blessèd creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
O evil day, if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,

In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy;
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,

And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate, man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size;
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes;
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnéd art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'
With all the persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—

Mighty prophet, seer blest,
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.

O joy, that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:

But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
To perish never:
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy.
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song,
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound:
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May.
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;

In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And oh, ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves:
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

W. WORDSWORTH.

XLI

SONG FROM 'AS YOU LIKE IT'

UNDER the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun,
And loves to live in the sun,
Seeking the food he eats,
And pleased with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

W. SHAKESPEARE.

XLII

THE USEFUL PLOUGH

A COUNTRY life is sweet;
In moderate cold and heat,
To walk in the air, how pleasant and fair,
In every field of wheat,
The fairest of flowers adorning the bowers,
And every meadow's brow;
So that I say, no courtier may
Compare with them who clothe in grey,
And follow the useful plough.

They rise with the morning lark,
And labour till almost dark;
Then folding their sheep, they hasten to sleep;
While every pleasant park
Next morning is ringing with birds that are singing
On each green, tender bough.
With what content and merriment,
Their days are spent, whose minds are bent
To follow the useful plough!

Old Song.

XLIII

THE SHEPHERD

How sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot;
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be filléd with praise.

For he hears the lambs' innocent call,
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;
He is watchful while they are at peace,
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

W. BLAKE.

XLIV

ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield,
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave
Await alike th' inevitable hour:—
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault
If memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes

Their lot forbad: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of luxury and pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered Muse
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonoured dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,—

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn;

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noon-tide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

'One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

'The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne,—
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon agéd thorn.'

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth, to fortune and to fame unknown;
Fair science frowned not on his humble birth,
And melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere;
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to misery (all he had) a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

T. GRAY.

NOTES

I

THE poet is depicting the varied aspects of a life full of innocent pleasures: the nymphs whom he invokes to give it are Mirth and Liberty. Foremost among these are the joys of those dwelling in the country: and Milton takes the opportunity of describing with short vivid touches the various scenes that would necessarily strike the eye of a traveller—a castle among the trees, a set of haymakers at work, the villagers dancing on the green after the day's toil is over, &c. It is to be observed that he does not seem to include among country pleasures the contemplation of the beauties of nature.

3. quips, properly taunts, and so any form of jest.

cranks. The original sense of the word is 'crooked'—hence anything fanciful or fantastic.

4. becks, a bend of the head, by way of salutation.

12. the mountain-nymph. It has become an historical commonplace to speak of mountain regions as homes of liberty, and not without reason. A mountainous country is necessarily more difficult for an invader, and therefore helps its inhabitants in defending themselves. For instance, when the Angles and Saxons invaded Britain, they drove the earlier inhabitants out of the level parts of the island, or reduced them to slavery; but the Celts were able to maintain their independence in the hilly regions, in Devon and Cornwall, in Wales and in Scotland.

21. then to come, i. e. Mirth is to come. The grammatical constructions throughout the poem are often very loose, but there is never any doubt as to the meaning.

24. eglantine, properly the sweet-briar. It is suggested that Milton here uses the word to mean honeysuckle, to which the epithet 'twisted' is exactly appropriate.

26. rear of darkness. The night is like a retreating army, and the lively crow of the cock makes a successful attack on it.

38. dight, pp. of 'to dight'; often taken as an archaic form of *decked*.

43. tells his tale, i. e. counts over his flock. 'Tale,' in the sense of a number to be reckoned, is now obsolete, though we may still so use the verb 'to tell.' Both are found in the Authorized Version of the Bible, which had not been published many years when Milton wrote this poem; e. g. Exod. v. 8, 'the *tale* of the bricks,' and Ps. xlviii. 12, 'Walk about Zion . . . and *tell* the towers thereof.'

47. russet lawns. Russet is properly reddish brown (Fr. *roux*), which is not the colour of grass. Possibly Milton means that combination of brown and green which may be seen in a closely mown meadow by morning light. Thomson (x. 16) speaks of a 'russet haycock,' which would be somewhat of the same shade. Poets, however, have been apt, until accurate observation of nature became common, to use colour epithets somewhat loosely. In XIV. 21 Scott uses the word 'russet' of a hillside in late autumn, which is in closer accordance with the derivation.

56. cynosure, properly the constellation of the Little Bear, in the tail of which is the pole-star; then for the pole-star itself. Then it is used derivatively for anything which forcibly attracts attention, as the magnetic needle is attracted to point towards the pole.

70. jocund, joyous (Lat. *iucundus*), has never been anything but a poetic word.

rebecks. The rebeck (more properly rebec) was an ancestor of the violin, possibly of Eastern origin. It had three strings stretched across a body shaped like the half of a pear, and was played with a bow. In Henry VIII's reign it was an important instrument, and occupied a place in the State band; later it declined in dignity, and by Milton's time was mainly used in rustic merry-makings.

77–90. The belief in fairies or pixies or 'good people,' as they are variously called, used to be prevalent in England, and is still to be found in outlying parts of the country. The stories, some of which Milton has here collected, represent them as tiny beings with superhuman powers, somewhat capricious and mischievous, but often giving assistance if properly treated, and above all if allowed to do their work unobserved.

78. Mab, the queen of the fairies: see Mercutio's speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act i. sc. 4.

junkets, a preparation of milk and rennet, to which are added cream and spice or other flavouring; it belongs particularly to the west of England. The word originally meant a kind of cream-cheese which was served on rushes (Lat. *iuncus*, Ital. *giunco*, and so *giuncata*). It may be used here loosely for any dainty or sweetmeat.

79. pinched and pulled, i. e. by fairy hands.

80. Friar's lantern, the marsh-light or Will of the Wisp.

81-90. One of the commonest legends of the fairies is that they visit houses or farmsteads in the dark, and if a bowl of cream is set out for them, work all the night through, and vanish before cock-crow.

86. lubber, here used as an adjective in the sense of clumsy or boorish.

fiend, rather loosely used for 'supernatural being.' It properly implies malevolence (A. S. *feónd*, an enemy), not assistance.

96. weeds of peace, i. e. dress suited not for war but for peace. 'Weeds,' as a word for dress generally, is now obsolete, except when applied to the dress of a widow. The word occurs again in XIII. 9.

101. Hymen, the classical god of marriage.

102. saffron, a species of crocus. The pollen, which is of deep yellow colour, is used for flavouring and colouring. The bridal veil among the Romans was of this colour.

104. mask, a form of dramatic entertainment, common in the seventeenth century, especially at weddings, as here. It had usually little or no plot, and was more in the nature of a pageant than of a play. Milton's well-known poem of *Comus* is a mask, or *masque*, as the word in this signification is now usually spelt.

108. Jonson's learnéd sock. 'Sock' (Lat. *soccus*) was a loose shoe. It was worn by comic actors on the Roman stage, while the *cothurnus*, a kind of boot, was worn in tragedy. Hence *soccus* came to be used as a metaphor for comedy. Ben Jonson was a dramatist of the generation before Milton, and had, as is here implied, carefully studied the ancient drama.

110. native wood-notes wild. It would seem as if Shakespeare's originality and independence of classical models were the characteristics that most struck Milton. The phrase here used is very appropriate to such plays as

As You Like It, The Tempest, The Midsummer Night's Dream, though it hardly does justice to Shakespeare's grander works.

112. lap, i. e. enfold, wrap up. The substantive originally meant any part of a garment which admitted of being folded over.

Lydian airs. The music of the Middle Ages did not employ our modern system of scales, but borrowed from Greek music what were called modes, i. e. primitive scales which differed from each other in the relative position of the semitones. Imagine a pianoforte without any black notes: then any length of eight notes on it would represent a mode. One of them, the Lydian mode, consisted of the eight 'white notes' from F to F; it was condemned by strict musicians as not being sufficiently dignified for Church use, and hence came to be regarded as wanton or luxurious in character. So Milton speaks of melodies written in this mode as '*soft* Lydian airs.'

117. heed, i. e. care, pains, or possibly the suffix *-hede,* signifying quality or condition, now generally superseded by the analogous form *-hood.* The structure of the phrase makes the former alternative far more probable.

121. The Greek legend is that the singer Orpheus, on the death of his bride Eurydice, penetrated to the regions of the dead, and by his music charmed Pluto into allowing Eurydice to return to earth, on condition that he should not turn to look at her until they reached the upper world again. At the last moment of the ascent Orpheus could bear the suspense no longer, and turned to look behind him, whereupon Eurydice vanished, and he saw her again no more.

II

The Question. This is Shelley's own title for the poem: the explanation is in the last three words.

9. wind-flowers, i. e. anemones. The name is derived from the Greek *ἄνεμος,* wind. Turner's *Herbal* (1568) says, 'Anemone hath the name, because the floure never openeth it selfe, but when the wynde bloweth.' The writer does not however say who is responsible for this very incorrect piece of observation.

10–1. Arcturus is a prominent star in the constellation Bootes, close to the tail of the Great Bear, which in the

latitude of England never goes below the horizon. The epithet 'constellated' is given to the daisy because it covers the grass with groups of white blossoms, as the constellations cover the sky with groups of stars. The daisy may be found in blossom all the year round in England, and so is aptly compared to stars that never set. Shelley repeats this allusion in VI. 40.

13. **that tall flower**, probably the daffodil. See a note on this poem in W. M. Rossetti's edition of Shelley.

17. **lush**, i. e. growing luxuriantly.

18. **moonlight-coloured.** The blossoms of the white-thorn have a faint tinge which differs from white, somewhat as moonlight differs from pure white light.

26. **pranked**, i. e. adorned. The flowers of the purple iris have often great splashes of white on them.

32. **sheen**, i. e. brightness. The word was also used as an adjective: see XVII. 33.

37. **these imprisoned children** is the subject of the sentence. The flowers in the poet's hand keep the same order as in their natural growth.

IV

2. **burgeons every maze of quick.** Every tangled quick-set hedge bursts out into bud.

3. **squares**, i. e. fields, which are apt to be more or less square in shape. Tennyson uses the word in the same sense elsewhere.

5. **rings the woodland**, i. e. with the song of the birds.

14. **greening gleam**, i. e. the sea as seen from a distance.

18. **my regret.** This is an extract from *In Memoriam*, Tennyson's great poem suggested by the death of his friend Arthur Hallam.

V

20. **this gaudy melon-flower.** Browning was writing in Italy, where the melon is common. Its flower, like that of other fruits of the same class, is large and of a rather dull yellow.

VI

Shelley wrote this poem near Pisa. In the Italian climate the beginnings of spring appear in February (see l. 10), a couple of months on the average earlier than in England.

With this exception the poem is as apt a description of a bright spring day in England as in Italy.

9. halcyon morn. *Halcyon* is the Greek name of the kingfisher. There was an ancient belief that there was a season of calm weather about midwinter, when the halcyon was brooding. Hence the word came to be used adjectively, meaning calm and bright.

32–3. The pools formed by the winter rains, which now reflect the new leaves of the trees overhanging them.

40. the daisy-star : see II. 11 note.

42. join not scent to hue. Shelley means the flowers which we commonly call dog-violets. They come out in the early spring, and have no scent.

VII

8. the hoary steed. Until artificial lines were introduced, grey horsehair was the least visible thing to which flies could be attached.

10. the tortured worm. The poet seems to have more compassion for the worm than for the trout, which he does not scruple to hook. A fish caught with a fly, however, will usually be hooked in the mouth, and will suffer much less in having the hook pulled out than if it had swallowed a worm with a hook inside.

25. Naiads. The name for the nymphs whom the Greeks supposed to inhabit streams of water. The poet suggests that those coming from mere brooks would be of correspondingly small size, and would enjoy the greater space in the river. The Greek mythology included other kinds of nymphs, e. g. Oreads in the mountains, Dryads in the trees (see XII. 27).

VIII

6. starry diadems, i. e. their crowns of dewdrops, which would be shaken off by any breeze.

7. sobbing of the morn—a false metaphor. Dewdrops might be represented as the tears of the morn, but only as silent tears.

11. a little noiseless noise, a noise so faint that it is scarcely perceptible.

24. wings of Mercury. Mercury, the classical messenger of the gods, was depicted with wings on his heels.

38. chequer, originally a chess-board, which is divided

into squares alternately dark and light; then anything showing a pattern of the same type. A young tree, with thin branches, throws a shadow more or less flecked with intervals of sunlight.

50. **Apollo** in classical mythology is the sun, and also the god of song; his two capacities are here blended.

57. **on tiptoe for a flight.** The flower of the sweet pea much resembles in shape a butterfly with its wings partly opened, preparing for flight.

67. **sallows** (Lat. *salix*, Fr. *saule*), the willow.

IX

6. **hawks are whistling.** In the time when hawking was an established sport, it was not unusual to use hawks in hunting the deer. The hawk pounced on the stag's head, blinding it, and so rendering it an easy prey to the dogs.

Hawking went entirely out of fashion during the seventeenth century; thus Scott's song is marked as referring to bygone times.

Whistling is not a very appropriate word for the cry of the hawk.

11. **springlets in the dawn are steaming,** i. e. the moisture is evaporating wherever there is any on the ground.

X

2. **meridian toil,** toil at midday (Lat. *meridies*). This word as an adjective is only found in poetry.

10. **wide flies the tedded grain.** Grass is said to be *tedded* when, after being mown, it is spread out to dry. The tedded *grain* is the ripe grass seeds which would be widely scattered in the process of tossing about the hay.

35. **sordid stream** (Lat. *sordidus*, dirty), dirtied by the sheep-washing. Trout will not stay in a stream which is artificially defiled. The effects of sheep-washing would of course pass off quickly.

38. **swelling treasures,** their fleeces, which as they dried would cease to cling closely to their bodies.

44. **wattled pen.** Anything is said to be wattled which is made by interlacing slips or twigs of wood, such as a hurdle.

57. **the master's cipher.** *Cipher* is properly the arithmetical symbol for 0. Then it came to be used loosely to

mean any arithmetical figure (the French equivalent *chiffre* is generally so used), and so for any device, such as intertwined initials, engraved or stamped on anything belonging to the owner.

XI

18. the next swath, the next line of corn to be cut, which Autumn, represented as a reaper, is for the time sparing, through having fallen asleep.

25. barrèd clouds. The sunset clouds are apt to lie in bars near the horizon, and their bright colours may be said to make the dying day bloom. They often throw a rosy glow on the mountains, sometimes on an open expanse of ground.

XII

21. tearful Proserpine. According to the Greek mythology, Persephone or Proserpine, daughter of Demeter goddess of the earth, was carried off by force to be the wife of Pluto, god of the world of the dead.

26. one upon the old oak tree. The poet's observation is here at fault. The oak retains upon the bough more of its dead leaves than any other deciduous tree. Many stay on until the new buds begin to form in the spring.

27. Dryad (Gr. δρῦς, an oak), one of the nymphs of Greek mythology residing in trees, properly in oak trees (see VII. 25).

XIII

9. weeds, i.e. clothes: see I. 96 note.

XIV

3. linn. This word, which is Scotch rather than English, may possibly be connected with the Celtic *llyn*, a lake. It is used to mean a stream, especially a cataract, and also, as here, for the steep-sided ravine in which a stream sometimes flows.

40. the daisy's vanished flower. Sir W. Scott probably takes the daisy as the typical wild flower, without having carefully noted its habits. The daisy flowers throughout the year far north of the Tweed (see also II. 11 note).

XV

10. embattled tower, the church tower, having battlements round it. So Macaulay, in the *Armada*, calls Lancaster castle 'Gaunt's embattled pile.'

XVI

31. the village clock tolled six. It must be remembered that the frosty season lasts sometimes very long in the latitude of the lakes, where Wordsworth wrote. In the middle of winter six o'clock would be an impossibly late hour for the 'orange sky' (l. 46).

35. confederate, i. e. played not singly, but in 'sides' or parties.

50–1. reflex of a star that fled. The reflection of a star in water, or in ice clear enough to reflect at all, seems to move away as one approaches, just because it is a reflection: and the faster one moves, the faster of course it seems to move also.

XVII

7. Iol, the midwinter feast of the heathen Danes. The word, in the form Yule, is still used, especially in Scotland, for the Christmas season.

13. sable beer. Beer can be brewed of a very dark colour, though it is not now often done in England.

17. scalds, the bards of the Scandinavian peoples.

23. Odin, also spelt Woden, was the chief Scandinavian deity. Their mythology represented the future life as spent in carousing in Odin's hall, in the intervals of fighting and hunting.

30–1. Christmas Eve was, and is, the only occasion in all the year when the Roman Catholic Church allows mass to be said in the evening.

34. kirtle sheen. *Kirtle* is a short upper garment. *Sheen* is the same as 'shining.'

45. 'post and pair,' an ancient card game.

64. wassel, otherwise spelt *wassail* (A. S. *wes hāl*), the words used in drinking any one's health: then the liquor used on such occasions, especially at Christmas time, hot spiced wine or ale.

65. trowls or *trolls*, i. e. circulates. The verb is used both transitively and, as here, intransitively.

74. mumming. The word is probably Danish in origin, and means 'those who disguise themselves.'

Among other Christmas festivities it has long been the custom, in many parts of this country, that a band of men should dress up and go round from house to house acting a kind of rude play. They knock at the door, ask whether the 'mummers' are wanted, and if the answer is favourable (as it usually is) they come into the hall or kitchen and begin their performance as soon as the family is assembled. The plot is always more or less the same. After a short prologue the hero (usually called St. George or Prince George) is introduced by the king his father, and boasts to the audience about his bravery and his victory over the dragon. Then comes an enemy (called in the North 'Alexander,' in the Midlands 'the Turkish knight'), roundly abuses him, and challenges him to single combat. They fight with wooden swords until one of the two falls: the other is filled with remorse, and calls for a doctor, who comes bustling in, makes a comic speech about his skill, and administers some absurd cure. The entertainment ends sometimes with a dance, sometimes with an epilogue, and always with a collection, after which the mummers go on to the next house and perform their play over again. The words of one version, called 'Alexander and the king of Egypt,' are printed in Hone's *Every Day Book*, vol. ii. pp. 1645–8, and are said to have been acted in that form at Whitehaven. A shorter version, called 'St. George and the Turkish knight,' has been frequently witnessed by the present writer in Gloucestershire.

75. mystery. The mystery was an ancient form of rude play, in which the characters were personified virtues and vices.

89. the kindred title, i. e. relationship. The Scotch are noted for acknowledging the ties of kindred in very distant degrees, more so than most peoples.

103–6. Scott's ancestor sacrificed the little he possessed in the cause of the exiled Stuarts, and vowed, so Scott tells in a note on this passage, never to shave his beard until they were restored to the throne.

XVIII

Most of the characteristics of the rivers, as here given, are to be found in Drayton's *Polyolbion*, and also in Spenser's *Faery Queen* (iv. 11) in the account of the marriage between Thames and Medway.

2. utmost Tweed, on the extreme northern border of England.

Ouse. There is more than one river of this name. This is probably that which flows southward through York, and helps to form the Humber.

gulphy Dun, the Don, one of the affluents of the Yorkshire Ouse. *Gulphy* means full of eddies or whirlpools ('It may be that the gulfs will wash us down,' Tennyson); but the epithet is by no means appropriate to the Don, which is a sluggish stream. It is probable that Milton, who could not have seen the Don, borrowed the epithet—not however from Spenser or Drayton, neither of whom mention it.

4. his thirty arms. Drayton gives a sort of legend that the Trent had thirty tributaries, thirty abbeys on its banks, and produced thirty kinds of fish. This, as he indicates, is implied in the name (Fr. *trente*, thirty).

5. that runneth underneath. The Mole disappears underground near Mickleham. The legend was that the river burrowed under the hills which tried to prevent its joining the Thames.

6. guilty of maiden's death. Sabrina, according to legend, was the daughter of a British king, who was drowned in the Severn in trying to escape from the enmity of her stepmother, and gave her name to the river. Milton makes use of this legend in *Comus*.

7. rocky Avon. This must be the Somersetshire Avon, the lower course of which, between Bristol and the Severn, flows between high rocks. The Clifton Suspension Bridge crosses it about where the valley is narrowest and the rocks highest.

sedgy Lee, now spelt Lea, a tributary of the Thames flowing out of Hertfordshire.

8. coaly Tine, now spelt Tyne. Newcastle-on-Tyne was the only place from which, in Milton's days, coal was brought to London.

ancient hallowed Dee. The Dee is believed to have been a sacred river in the days of Druid worship.

9. the Scythian's name. The legend is that more than a thousand years before the Christian era, a body of Scythians invaded Britain by way of the Humber estuary and were defeated, and that the river received its name from their leader, who was drowned in it.

10. royal-towered Thame. The final -s is dropped for

the sake of the rhyme. The royal castle of Windsor is close to the Thames.

XIX

It is noteworthy how, throughout this poem, the music of the words suggests the motion and sound of a quick-flowing brook. Tennyson excelled in this form of verbal music.

7. **thorps**, i. e. hamlets, the same word as the German *Dorf*.

XX

The tide always appears to ebb faster than it comes in. In a river, at any rate, this is really the case, for the flowing tide has to overcome the stream, which on the contrary helps the ebbing tide.

XXI

6. **never-bloomless furze.** Where gorse or furze is plentiful, its golden flowers may be found all the year through.

XXIII

4. **burn itself away.** This refers to the brilliant red of the maple leaves when they are withering in autumn, before falling off.

11. **the lesser wain.** The constellation of the Great Bear is also called 'Charles's Wain.' Tennyson here gives the same name to the Little Bear, in the tail of which is the pole-star. The Little Bear in the course of the night seems to describe part of a circle round the pole-star as centre. *Wain* is the same word as wagon.

22. **glebe,** the soil (Lat. *gleba*, a clod of earth), obsolete in this sense except in poetry. The word is now technically used to mean that portion of the land in a parish which forms the endowment for the clergyman.

39. **thy lost friend.** This poem, like IV, is an extract from *In Memoriam*.

XXIV

Fountains Abbey, one of the finest of monastic ruins, is enclosed in the beautiful park of Studley Royal, near Ripon.

XXV

The poem from which these stanzas have been taken is founded on a tale in Glanvil's *Vanitie of Dogmatising*' (1661), which tells how an Oxford scholar was obliged, by pressure of poverty, to give up his studies, and how he joined a wandering band of gipsies and adopted their life. Matthew Arnold has not followed the story in all its details, and has mainly used it, in these lines, as a thread on which to hang his description of the scenes near Oxford, and especially of those which lie on the border of Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

Take a map of the Oxford country and trace along the road which passes from the city westward, and then south-westward. About two miles out, across the Berkshire frontier, stands a piece of rising ground called Cumnor Hurst (the 'Hurst' of l. 57), and just beyond it the village of Cumnor (see ll. 69, 101, and 127), famous for the story of Amy Robsart (see Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*). Another stretch of two miles or so, in the same direction, leads to the ferry of Bablock-hithe (l. 74), where the 'promontory' of Berkshire ends and the traveller crosses into Oxfordshire again. The forest of Wychwood (l. 79) is in this part of Oxfordshire, to the west and north-west of Witney.

A few miles south of Bablock-hithe is Fyfield (l. 83), which lies almost directly south-west of Oxford.

Return towards the city until you once more arrive at Cumnor: then strike away to the right and you will pass the village of South Hinksey mentioned in l. 125. The low-lying fields, often flooded in winter, are still traversed by the causeway mentioned in l. 121. Close by South Hinksey runs the road from Oxford to Abingdon, passing through Bagley Wood (l. 111) and near a patch of forest-ground which is sometimes called Thessaly from its shape (see l. 115).

So far all the places mentioned have been, with one exception, to the south and south-west of Oxford. One still remains, the bridge (l. 91) of Godstow (there is practically no village) close to the ruined nunnery of Godstow, famous for the story of Fair Rosamond: this is situated nearly north of the city, almost two miles distant.

It may be added that the place from which the poem is supposed to be written is the upland that lies between Hinksey and Cumnor, from which one of the finest views of Oxford is to be seen. One of its conspicuous features is the

Hall of Christ Church (l. 129), especially in the evening when the long line of windows is lighted up.

2. wattled. See x. 46 note.

cotes, sheep pens. The Cotswold hills take the first part of their name from this word.

9. moon-blanched, pale in the moonlight.

13. cruise, or *cruse*, a pitcher. It is the same word as the German *krug* and the English *crock* and *crockery*. It is probably of Celtic origin. Cf. 'a little oil in a cruse,' 1 Kings xvii. 12.

26. lindens, the lime-tree (Ger. *linde*). The two words may possibly be originally identical. The modern use of the word *linden* is, however, a conscious borrowing from the German.

37. lore, learning, derived from the Gothic *lais*, to find out: compare iron from *eisen*.

59. ingle-bench, i. e. the bench by the chimney-corner. The word *ingle* is of obscure origin; usually identified with Gael. *Aingeal*, fire, light.

Smock-frock, a long white frock which used to be frequently (and is still sometimes) worn by farmers and farm-labourers. Its name is derived from the A. S. *smūgan*, to creep through a hole, because the wearer has to draw it over his head and 'creep through' the neckhole.

69. green-muffled: *muff* means a warm soft covering, hence applied to the long grass in the summer fields.

74. stripling Thames, more accurately the Isis.

83. The old May-day customs, and especially the May-day dance, are still kept up in some parts of Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

120. the spark from Heaven. For the explanation of this phrase see ll. 45–50.

XXVI

The Deserted Village is usually reckoned among didactic poems, those written to set forth the author's opinions on moral or social questions. Its value, however, lies not in the poet's views about the evils of wealth and the true sources of national prosperity, but in his vivid descriptions of village life.

It is generally said that Auburn is the Irish village in which Goldsmith's childhood was spent. The description, however, is rather of English than of Irish scenes, and is not to be taken as strictly true of any one place. Indeed, it is

not credible that any village should have been deserted, and its houses left to fall into literal ruins, in the manner described.

2. swain. This word, signifying a rustic, and especially a rustic lover, belongs to the poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and can scarcely be said to have ever been in ordinary use.

40. half a tillage. This must not be taken literally. A rich man might buy up land to extend his own park, in which case tillage would cease: otherwise he would have every motive for cultivating the land fully.

58. every rood. A rood is literally a quarter of an acre; but is here used loosely for a patch of ground.

104. Goldsmith is pleading that the peasant should remain on his native soil, and he naturally in so doing ignores the benefits of commerce. It is of course literally true that the miner or the sailor does not work directly for the peasant; but it is equally true that without their labour he could not live the life which the poet desires for him.

140. The character of the village preacher is said to have been drawn mainly from the author's brother, Henry Goldsmith, Vicar of Athlone, who died shortly before these lines were composed. See Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*, 303.

142. passing, surpassingly, exceedingly. The word is occasionally used as equivalent to 'passably,' which would fit the facts of the case here. It is, however, generally thought that Goldsmith used it in the other sense, of course ironically.

210. gauge. To *gauge* is to ascertain, by measurement and calculation, the amount of liquid contained in a cask or other vessel.

232. the twelve good rules. A common ornament in the eighteenth century, in houses of the humbler class, was a woodcut of the execution of Charles I, with twelve rules of conduct printed below it, which were supposed to be his.

the royal game of goose was a game, now obsolete, played with counters on a board divided into compartments, on some of which a goose was painted.

248. mantling bliss: the foaming beer, which gives the drinkers pleasure. The verb to *mantle* is used both actively and also, as here, intransitively, always with a sense of some kind of covering. For an instance of the first, see l. 132, 'mantling cresses,' i. e. covering the surface of the brooks. Here the liquid is mantling, i. e. has a covering of froth.

307–8. During the eighteenth century many hundreds of Acts of Parliament were passed, authorizing the enclosure of commons in various parts of England. On these commons the peasants had been able to pasture their cattle gratis, in some cases of right, in others by the tacit permission of the landowners. Hence the enclosures were a serious loss to them, and in many cases deprived them of actual rights. It was not till 1801 that Parliament enacted that no enclosures should henceforth be made without providing compensation for these 'rights of common.'

315. brocade, a fabric with a raised pattern, originally one worked in gold or silver thread.

341–58. This paragraph is a very highly coloured description of the terrors of the tropics, and is indeed inapplicable to any one region: the rattlesnake is peculiar to America, the tiger is found only in Asia. The name *Altama*, it is suggested, is contracted, for the sake of the verse, from Altamaha, a river in Georgia. That colony, the last of the English settlements in what are now the United States of America, was founded a generation before, with objects mainly benevolent, and a certain number of English emigrants had gone there. The southern limit of Georgia is 30° N., but the swampy belt along the coast has many of the drawbacks of the tropics. It is probable enough that Goldsmith may have heard accounts, perhaps exaggerated, of the evils encountered by the early settlers in Georgia.

357. tornado, from *tronada*, the Spanish word for a whirling storm, such as is now called a cyclone. These storms are not uncommon in tropical regions, and often do much destruction.

363–84. This description of the exiles' intense grief is appropriate rather to the Irish than to the English. Few peoples, if any, have furnished more willing or more capable emigrants than the English; few cling to home more fondly than the Irish. It should not be forgotten that Goldsmith was himself an Irishman.

418. Neither of these names is found in the modern map. *Torno*, it is suggested, may be altered from Tornea in the north of Sweden. There is no name even remotely resembling *Pambamarca*, but the context implies that a mountain near the Equator is intended, probably in the Andes.

419. equinoctial, that is, equatorial. When the sun is on the equator the nights and days are equal all over the earth.

XXVIII

The authorship of this poem, which Burke considered the most beautiful lyric in the English language, was long a matter of dispute, the claims put forward being those of Michael Bruce and John Logan, both ministers near Edinburgh during the latter part of the eighteenth century. It is now regarded as certain that Logan was the author.

XXXI

19. pent-housed by a brae. A *penthouse* is a projecting roof. *Brae* is a Lowland Scotch word, meaning a steep bank, especially one overhanging a stream. It is the same word as *brow*.

XXXIII

6. art thou the Peter of Norway boors? It was in old times customary to give pet names to the commoner kinds of bird. Thus in the sixteenth century the sparrow was called 'Philip'; and two other instances survive in 'Robin' Redbreast and 'Tom' Tit. Wordsworth here quotes examples from Norway ('Peter') and from Finland ('Thomas') of names similarly applied by the peasants of those countries.

Boor (Ger. *Bauer*) originally meant peasant or countryman. Our idea of roughness or ill manners has become attached to the word later.

13. this sight, i. e. the sight of the redbreast chasing a butterfly.

35. in crimson are drest. The butterfly which most nearly answers this description is the Red Admiral (*Vanessa Atalanta*), the wings of which are strongly marked with red bars. Crimson is not quite an accurate word, either for the butterfly or for the redbreast; but colour names are often used loosely in poetry, even by so close an observer as Wordsworth.

XXXVI

34. Narcissus fair. The Greek fable is that Narcissus saw his own face reflected in the water, and fell in love with it, and at last threw himself in to embrace the reflection, and was drowned.

XXXVII

25. a little Cyclops. Homer tells how Ulysses in his wanderings came upon a giant with a single eye in the

centre of his forehead. The name Cyclops is derived from two Greek words suggesting this.

XXXVIII

21–4. The meaning of the last stanza is—Man, like the celandine, is in youth 'a prodigal's favourite,' i. e. is enriched with every kind of blessing, and in old age is 'a miser's pensioner,' i. e. must be satisfied with the little he can enjoy. It is well for a man if in his progress from youth to age he loses only those things which age can spare without regret.

XXXIX

6. sophistries, i. e. shallow and fallacious arguments. The Sophists were Greek teachers of rhetoric, who had a reputation, not always deserved, for instructing their pupils 'how to make the worse appear the better reason.' Hence the word came to be used for those who argued plausibly but not soundly.

XL

In this ode the feeling for the beauties of nature is expressed in a deeper and a graver tone. Thomson is throughout a rustic poet; he describes the scenes and events of country life just as they occur, and makes little or no attempt to draw from them any lesson for the reader's instruction. Goldsmith uses his *Deserted Village* as a text from which to preach a few simple truths—the dangers of the race for wealth, the temptations of the town, the blessings of home, and the pains of exile. But Wordsworth penetrates more deeply; to him nature was full of voices in which the 'wisdom and spirit of the universe' comes into direct communion with the soul. Much of his thought is difficult to understand, not because it is obscurely expressed (for no poem in our language is more nobly written), but because it deals with matters which lie beyond the reach of our ordinary every-day concerns. It may be well, therefore, to introduce the ode by a short paraphrase, which shall explain Wordsworth's point of view, and state his meaning without criticism or commentary on our part. The intention and doctrine of the poem are briefly as follows:—

When we speak of the soul as immortal we commonly look forward and think of it as continuing to exist after the

death of the body. Many writers, however, have understood immortality in a wider sense, and have taken it to mean not only that the soul will continue to exist, but that it has always existed; not only that it will outlive the body, but that it was before the body was born. Some such thought we may find in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, where the writer, speaking of death, says, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.' The spirit of man, as it will return to God when we die, so it came from God to be born into our human life.

When the soul is born into the body it is impeded by all the errors and imperfections of our mortal nature. Not that it loses its own spiritual character, but, for the time of our life on earth, it is obliged to work through our limited human senses and our limited human experience. And if this is so, it is possible to hold that the soul is purest and most free in childhood, before the cares and troubles and misdoings of our human life have gathered round it. It is then nearest to God from whom it came, it has a closer vision of divine truth. In later years it is only at rare moments that we can recall glimpses of the heaven which 'lies about us in our infancy,' and can once more become as little children.

This is the foundation upon which Wordsworth's ode is built. In the first four stanzas he contrasts the child's vision of nature 'apparelled in celestial light' with that of the grown man to whom this light has partly faded, from whom 'the glory and the dream' have fled. Nature is just as beautiful, - the rainbow, the rose, the waters on a starry night,—but the man's eyes are holden; he can see the beauty, but he can no longer find in it the joy of his childhood. The fifth stanza, which is the very core and centre of the ode, describes the coming of the soul from God, its birth into the body, and how the divine light which it brings from heaven is gradually dimmed in the shades of our mortal prison-house until

> **The man perceives it die away,**
> **And fade into the light of common day.**

(vi-viii.) The soul, in its life on earth, is like a prince who has been sent away from his imperial palace to be brought up in a distant land by a foster-nurse. At first he will remember something of his old home, it will be in his thoughts even among new pleasures and new occupations:

but as the years go on he will recollect it less and less, the new life will take hold of him, and with 'no unworthy aim' (for we must all live the life appointed to us) 'the homely nurse doth all she can' to make him forget. And so the very sports of the child are often imitations of the events of the human life, toys which the foster-nurse has brought him that he may grow accustomed to his exile. Though he has still in his heart the light of God's presence, from whence he is so lately come, yet 'earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own,' and the child, 'blindly with his blessedness at strife,' is content to play with the things of this world before the years come which shall lay them upon him as a burden.

(ix-xi.) But the vision of God, though dimmed by the things of this world, is never wholly lost. Even in our embers the divine spark yet lives. There are moments when we feel the reality of the Spirit so strongly that we are led to question whether 'outward things'—those that we can touch and see—are in the same sense real at all. There are moments when we feel affections and impulses which are not of this world, which belong to our true home in heaven, and which nothing on the earth can ever 'abolish or destroy.' In them we recollect the presence of God, just as a man living inland may recollect the sea which brought him to the coast, and on the shores of which the children are still playing. True, it is only a memory, not an actual vision: we no longer see it face to face, but keep it in remembrance. Yet this memory is 'the fountain-light of all our day,' the 'faith that looks through death,' and waits in confidence for our return to the 'imperial palace whence we came.' We shall love nature more, not less, when we realize that nature is not all, but that there is God behind it. To the soul which can hold fast the message of the Eternal Mind, everything in nature is full of divine significance.

4. apparelled in celestial light, i. e. clothed in the spiritual light of which, Wordsworth tells us, childhood has a clearer vision than that of later years.

12–3. There is a similar thought in Shelley's *Skylark* (XXVII. 28–30).

21. tabor, a small drum used in olden days to beat the time for rustic dances. It generally accompanied a 'pipe,' which played the melody. See ll. 170–2.

38. jubilee. The Jewish law (Lev. xxv) appointed that every fiftieth year should be a period of rest and restitution.

Hence the word is used for any fiftieth anniversary, and generally, as here, for any occasion of rejoicing.

40. coronal, the crown or garland worn in ancient times at a festival.

58–76. our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting. The perceptions of the soul are dulled by its birth into the body. The direct knowledge of God—the 'light' of which this stanza speaks—is gradually covered and enclosed by the growth of human experience. Hence it is fainter in boyhood than in infancy, in youth than in boyhood, until 'at length the man perceives it die away.'

71. from the east, i. e. from the source of the light.

72. priest: because he still sees something of the divine vision, though less than in earlier years.

78. in her own natural kind, i. e. according to her own special nature. The word 'kind' is here used in the same sense as in Gen. i. 24, 'the living creature after his *kind*.'

84. imperial palace: see introductory note.

86. pigmy. The Greeks knew of the existence of a race of dwarfs somewhere in Africa, whom they believed to be much smaller than they really are, and called Pygmies, from a word meaning the forearm, which they thought was the measure of their height. The dwarfish race known as the Bushmen once occupied a great part of the extreme south of Africa, but has now greatly dwindled in numbers. Another such race has been found in the forest region between the Upper Congo and the great lakes whence the Nile flows.

88. fretted, touched lightly and rapidly. **sallies,** flights.

102. con means 'to study, peruse, scan,' A. S. *cunnian*, to test. Cf. *ale-conner* = ale-tester. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, I. ii. 'Here are your parts, and I am to entreat you to con them.' Allied to A. S. *cunnan*, to know (Ger. *kennen*). [Skeat.]

103. humorous, capricious or versatile.

105. equipage, attendance or retinue: so Spenser speaks of 'The god of war with his fierce *equipage*.'

108–28. The child has not yet lost his inheritance of divine knowledge, and therefore sees face to face the truths which men 'are toiling all their lives to find.' To the turmoil of the world he is 'deaf and silent,' just as men have grown 'blind' to his vision of the eternal deep.

141–55. obstinate questionings of sense and outward things. Wordsworth tells us that in his boyhood he was often so overpowered by the feeling of his spiritual nature

as to doubt whether the 'outward things' which he perceived by his senses had any reality at all. At the time he was afraid of these 'blank misgivings'; in later life he regretted that they had left him, and welcomed them on the rare occasions when they returned. The things of the soul have a higher reality and a deeper truth than the things of the body, as God has a higher reality than the world which He has created. To 'question' the reality of the world, in whatever way one answers the question, is only possible to a soul that has come from God. And the same witness is borne by those 'high instincts' beside which we feel our mortal nature as 'guilty'; by the 'affections' which can enable us to treat our 'noisy years' as of little account beside the 'eternal silence'; by the truths of divine origin which we can never wholly disbelieve or forget. All alike teach us to know that we have a higher and truer life than our temporary sojourn in this world.

177-8. the hour of splendour, i.e. the time of childhood when the earth 'did seem apparelled in celestial light.'

181. primal, i.e. belonging to the very essence of the soul, not derived from anything external to it. It means that which has existed in us from the first.

188. forebode not any severing of our loves. Wordsworth means that though the poet can see through the beauties of nature to the higher reality beyond them, though he can exchange their 'habitual sway' for the truer freedom of the spiritual life, yet he will not love them less. The flower becomes to him not only a flower, but the symbol of a spiritual truth.

Forbode. Used loosely in the sense of 'foretell' or 'expect.' The old word *bode* means properly to portend, i.e. to give a reason for expecting: so in *Hamlet*, 'This *bodes* some strange eruption to our state.'

199. palms. Used from ancient times as the symbols of victory.

XLIV

1. curfew (Fr. *couvrefeu*). In the Middle Ages there was a rule in many places that all fires should be extinguished by a fixed hour in the evening, announced by the ringing of a bell. The practice of ringing the bell was continued in some places after the rule had ceased to be enforced, and so the word came to be used for any evening bell, as here.

The introduction of the curfew is usually attributed to William the Conqueror, but there is no evidence for this.

26. glebe: see XXIII. 22 note.

33. heraldry, properly the system of rules for determining what coat-of-arms a man is entitled to use. Here the 'boast of heraldry' signifies the claim to distinction derived from ancient birth.

41. storied urn. It was the practice of the Romans, who burned their dead, to keep the ashes in a closed urn, on which was inscribed the name, &c., of the deceased.

animated bust, a statue representing the dead as he was in life.

45–72. The poet suggests that perhaps some of those buried here might have been great men, for good or for evil, had their lot not been cast in obscurity—rulers (ll. 47, 61–4), poets (l. 48), tyrants (ll. 67–8).

57. some village Hampden: some peasant who had the courage to resist injustice from the great man of the village, as Hampden withstood Charles I.

59. some mute inglorious Milton: some one who had the gifts of a great poet like Milton, but did in fact remain silent, and therefore won no glory.

60. some Cromwell, guiltless: some one capable of being a great revolutionary soldier and statesman, like Cromwell, who never had the opportunity, and therefore never shed the blood of his countrymen.

69–72. The obscurity which prevented some possible poets from being known saved them also from making an unworthy use of their talents. In the eighteenth century a poor man of letters was dependent on the patronage of the great, and might be tempted to write against his conscience, especially in the form of flattery to his patron.

92. in our ashes. From the Roman practice of burning the dead, the word *ashes* came to be used in poetry for the remains of the dead. The line means that even after we are dead we retain an interest in the world.

93. for thee. The rest of the poem is an anticipation by Gray of the career of the supposed author of the elegy, by no means answering to his own prospects.

95. if chance. The expression is elliptical, 'If it should happen that.'

119. fair science frowned not. Humble though his birth was, he had the opportunity of acquiring knowledge.

[THE following is the list, in alphabetical order, of the poets from whose works extracts have been taken. A very short biographical note is appended to each name.]

ARNOLD, Matthew (1822–1888) XXV.

Eldest son of Dr. Arnold of Rugby: born at Laleham, near Staines, and educated at Rugby and Balliol College, Oxford. He became a Fellow of Oriel, and in 1851 was appointed to an Inspectorship of Schools. For ten years, from 1857 to 1867, he was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and some of his famous Critical Essays were first delivered as lectures from that Chair.

BLAKE, William (1757–1827) XLIII.

Poet and painter: born and educated in London. His poetic gift showed itself early, and some of his most beautiful lyrics were written before he was fourteen. He maintained himself mainly by engraving. The *Songs of Innocence*, from which XLIII is taken, were written in 1787 and refused by all publishers; whereupon Blake engraved the entire book himself, a practice which he continued for many of his later works.

BROWNING, Robert (1812–1889) V.

Born in Camberwell: wrote verses before he was six, and endeavoured, without success, to publish his first volume before he was twelve. He had little regular education, but he was always a voluminous reader, and from the first trained himself for literature. In 1846 he married Miss Barrett, the poetess, and lived with her for the rest of her life in Italy. He died at Venice in 1889, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

CLARE, John (1793–1864) III, XXX.

The son of a Northamptonshire peasant, he earned as a ploughboy the pence which paid for his education at the village school, and on leaving it maintained himself as a farm-labourer on wages which seem never to have risen above nine shillings a week. A collected volume of his poems, dealing almost entirely with the scenery and life of his native district, was published in 1820, and others later. Towards the end of his life he became insane, and he died in the Asylum at Northampton.

COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor (1772–1834) XXI, XXXII.

Born at his father's vicarage, Ottery St. Mary in Devonshire: educated at Christ's Hospital (where he

was the school-fellow of Charles Lamb), and at Jesus College, Cambridge. He was a close friend of Wordsworth and Southey, with whom his name is generally associated as a member of the so-called 'Lake School' of poetry. He was a great philosopher as well as a great poet, and one of the first Englishmen to acquire a thorough knowledge of German literature.

COWPER, William (1731–1800) XV, XXII.

Born at his father's rectory, Great Berkhampstead: educated at Westminster, and in 1754 called to the Bar. Early in his career he was attacked by a form of religious melancholy, which so affected his spirits that he was obliged to give up his profession. In 1765 he went to live at Olney with his friends the Unwins, who looked after him until his death. While living with them he wrote most of his poems: the *Olney Hymns* (1773-1779), *John Gilpin* (1782), *The Task* (1784) (from which are taken XV and XXII), and the *Translation of Homer*.

ELLIOTT, Ebenezer (1781–1849) XXIV.

Born at Masborough, Rotherham, the son of a workman in an iron-foundry. He had scarcely any education, though he wrote verses from boyhood. He was all his life a strong Radical, and took part in the Chartist movement, and in the agitation against the Corn Laws. His most famous work is the *Corn Law Rhymes* (1831), a vigorous protest in favour of repeal. He lived just long enough to see his cause successful.

GOLDSMITH, Oliver (1728–1774) XXVI.

Born near Longford in Ireland. His father in 1730 became Vicar of Lissoy, the village which probably, more than any other single place, suggested the scenery of *The Deserted Village*. Educated at Athlone, Longford, and Trinity College, Dublin. For some years he led an unsettled life, and in 1756 reached London in great poverty, and began to write for the booksellers. His greatest works were: *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), the two comedies *The Good-natured Man* (1767) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771), and *The Deserted Village* (published in 1770). He was the close friend of Johnson, Garrick, Burke, and Sir Joshua Reynolds.

GRAY, Thomas (1716–1771) XLIV.

Born in London, educated at Eton and Peterhouse, Cambridge, a lifelong friend of Horace Walpole. After

travelling for three years on the Continent he settled down at Cambridge, where he was appointed Professor of History and Modern Languages in 1768, and where he died in 1771. The *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* was begun at Stoke Pogis in 1742, but was laid aside, and not finished until 1750.

HERRICK, Robert (1591–1674) XXXIV, XXXV.

Born in London, the son of a goldsmith: educated at Westminster School and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. In 1629 he became Vicar of Dean Prior in Devonshire, where he remained till his death, except that, being a royalist, he was ejected during the Commonwealth. His poems, which are mostly short and largely lyrical or epigrammatic, were published under the collective title of *Hesperides* in 1648.

HOOD, Thomas (1799–1845) XII.

Born and educated in London. His health not being strong enough for a profession, he supported himself by literature, and was contributor and editor to several magazines. His poems were mainly humorous, usually with a strong element of pathos: the most noted of them are *The Song of the Shirt*, *The Bridge of Sighs*, and *Miss Kilmansegg*.

KEATS, John (1795–1821) VIII, XI.

Born in London and educated for the medical profession, but abandoned active practice almost immediately, to devote himself to poetry. His health broke down under the pressure of domestic troubles, aided by the effect, it is said, of the contemptuous reviews of his first poems, and he died at Rome, having been taken to Italy as a last chance of restoring his health. His poems mark a complete revolt against the conventional methods of the eighteenth century, and are full of imagination: the chief of them are *Endymion* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

LOGAN, John (1748–1788) XXVIII.

Born at Soutra, Fala, Midlothian, and educated at Musselburgh and Edinburgh University. From 1770 till his death he was licensed preacher at Haddington.

MILTON, John (1608–1674) I, XVIII.

Born in London, and educated at St. Paul's School and at Christ's College, Cambridge. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were written soon after he left the University

(1632), then came *Comus* (1634) and *Lycidas* (printed in 1638). Shortly after the appearance of *Lycidas* he went abroad for a year, and on returning began to take part in political controversy on the parliamentary side. The most famous of his tracts, *Areopagitica*, was written in 1644. In 1649 he was appointed Latin Secretary to the government of the Commonwealth, an office which he held until the Restoration. In 1653 or 1654 he became totally blind. About 1658 he began *Paradise Lost*, completed it in 1665, and followed it, in 1670, with *Paradise Regained* (which he regarded as his greatest poem) and *Samson Agonistes*.

SCOTT, Walter (1771–1832) IX, XIV, XVII.

Descended from the great Border family of which the Duke of Buccleuch is the head. Born and educated at Edinburgh, he went to the Scotch Bar: but his life was devoted to literature. His Waverley novels, published at first anonymously, are the works on which his fame chiefly depends. His poems were, however, the origin of his literary reputation, most of them having been published before *Waverley*. *Marmion*, from which XIV and XVII are extracted, appeared in 1808.

SHAKESPEARE, William (1564–1616) XLI.

Born and educated at Stratford-on-Avon, where his father was a prosperous trader. In 1586 he went up to London, and maintained himself first as an actor, and then as a dramatic author. From 1591 to 1597 he was employed in revising and amending the works of other playwrights; in 1597 he published *Love's Labour's Lost*, his first independent play, and from thence to 1611 the rest of his dramas, the latest of which were probably *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. In 1611 he returned to Stratford, where he spent the last five years of his life. He was unquestionably recognized as the greatest dramatist of his day—in the year 1613 alone no less than seven of his plays were performed in London—but it was not until long after his death that the full value and meaning of his work began to be understood.

SHELLEY, Percy Bysshe (1792–1822) II, VI, XXVII.

Son of Sir Timothy Shelley, Bart.: born at Field Place, near Horsham, and educated at Eton and University College, Oxford. In 1814 he left England and settled in Italy, where he remained for the rest of his life. In

1822 he was drowned off the coast near Viareggio, and was buried at Rome.

SOUTHEY, Robert (1774–1843) XX, XXXIX.

Son of a linendraper: born in Bristol, and educated at Westminster and at Balliol College, Oxford. His republican sympathies gained him the friendship of Coleridge, and for some time the two lived together in Bristol, where Southey wrote his first two important works, *Joan of Arc* and *Thalaba*. A few years later he removed to Greta in Cumberland, where he resided for the rest of his life, writing almost continuously both poetry and prose. In 1813, at the suggestion of Sir Walter Scott, he was made Poet Laureate.

TENNYSON, Alfred (1809–1892) IV, XIX, XXIII.

Son of a clergyman: born at Somersby in Lincolnshire: educated first at home, and afterwards at Trinity College, Cambridge. He devoted himself early to poetry, and began publishing at the age of twenty-one. In 1850, on the death of Wordsworth, he was made Poet Laureate; and in the same year published *In Memoriam*, a reflective elegiac poem suggested by the death of his friend Arthur Hallam. It is from this poem that IV and XXIII are taken.

THOMSON, James (1700–1748) VII, X, XXXVI.

Son of a Scottish minister on the Border: educated at Edinburgh, and went up to London at twenty-five to seek his fortune in literature. His *Seasons* (1726–1730) are his principal work, and may reasonably be said to be the beginning of nature-poetry in England.

WORDSWORTH, William (1770–1850) XIII, XVI, XXIX, XXXI XXXIII, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XL.

Son of a lawyer: born at Cockermouth, and educated at Hawkshead and at St. John's College, Cambridge. Like Coleridge and Southey he was an ardent republican in early life, and he visited France in 1791–2, the years in which the monarchy was overthrown. From 1793 to 1799 he spent much of his time in travelling, partly in England, partly on the Continent; after this he settled down near Grasmere, where his life passed almost without event, until in 1843, though seventy-three years of age, he accepted the Laureateship, vacated by the death of his friend Southey.